Missouri Department of Mental Health
Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

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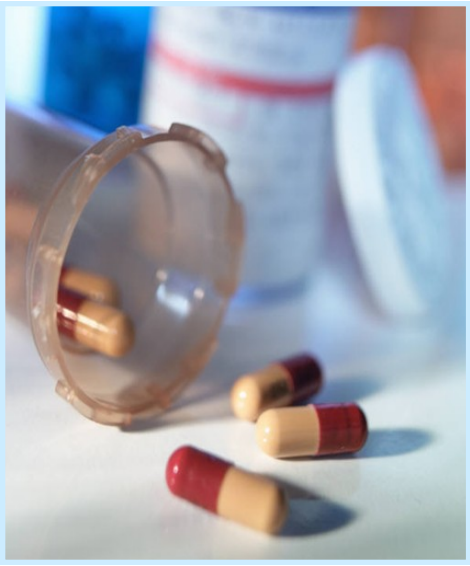
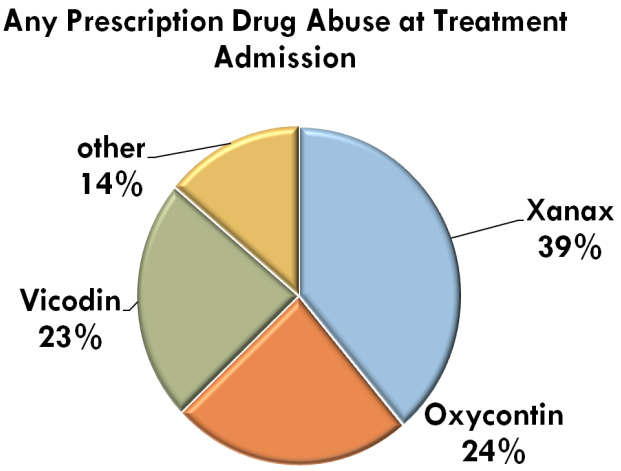
Prescription Drug Abuse in Missouri



Misuse of prescription drugs is the incorrect use of a medication that requires a doctor's prescription. This may involve taking too little or too much of the drug or taking it too often or too long. Specifically, nonmedical use of prescription drugs is the use of medications for the experience or feeling the drug causes (i.e. the "high"). Nonmedical use of certain types of medications can lead to drug abuse or dependence—typically characterized by drug cravings; obsessive drug-seeking behavior; tendency to increase amount and/or frequency of use; neglect of family, job, and/or school; physical deterioration; and withdraw symptoms when use is reduced or stopped. Some people incorrectly assume that prescription drugs are safe to take under any circumstances because they are prescribed by a physician.

Commonly abused types of prescription drugs include Opioids (ex. OxyContin, Vicodin), depressants (ex. Xanax, Valium), and stimulants (ex. Dexedrine, Adderall, Ritalin). Abuse of prescription Opioids, in particular, has contributed to a significant increase in the rate of unintentional drug overdose deaths in the U.S. In recent years, more overdose deaths have involved Opioid prescription drugs than heroin and cocaine combined.[1] In addition, abuse of prescription Opioids has been implicated in increasing rates of heroin use as prescription formulations change to make abuse more difficult.[2] Individuals who use prescription Opioids for nonmedical purposes most often get the medications from friends or family members for free.[3]



Missouri Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Treatment Admissions FY 2012.

Each year, approximately 3,200 Missourians enter substance abuse treatment with a prescription drug abuse problem. The most common medication abused is Xanax (39%) followed by Oxycontin (24%) and Vicodin (23%). Together, these three medications account for about 86 percent of the prescription drug abuse by individuals entering treatment. Oxycontin and Vicodin are more likely to be identified as the primary substance of abuse – indicating the tendency to have significant impairment on the quality of life when abused. Most individuals admitted to treatment for a prescription drug problem are also abusing marijuana and/or alcohol.

A higher percentage of prescription drug treatment admissions are female (46%) compared to that for non-prescription drug treatment admission (31%). Prescription drug admissions are disproportionately Caucasian whereas non-prescription drug admissions are disproportionately African-American. Individuals admitted to treatment report first abusing prescription drugs in their early 20's with the first abuse of Xanax occurring somewhat earlier than that of the Opioid pain relievers. Those with a prescription drug problem are more likely to self-refer to treatment whereas those with non-prescription drug problems are more likely to be referred by the criminal justice system. Treatment outcomes are similar but somewhat lower than those realized for other substance abuse problems. For those with a prescription drug problem, 30-day abstinence is achieved by about 60 percent of those discharged from treatment.

Sources: [1]Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012). "CDC Grand Rounds: Prescription Drug Overdoses—a U.S. Epidemic." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.* 61(01);10-13.
[2]Cicero, T.J. & Surratt, H.L. (2012). "Effect of Abuse-Deterrent Formulation of OxyContin." *The New England Journal of Medicine*. 367:187-189.
3U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2011). Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings.

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